

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ADDIS 13171 080648Z

15

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 ACDA-05 IO-10 AID-05

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DODE-00 L-03 PRS-01 /086 W

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R 071436Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6982

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USCINCEUR

S E C R E T ADDIS ABABA 13171

DEPT PASS BAGDAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PINS PINT PFOR ET SU IZ SY

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN: ERITREA AND
ETHIO-SUDANESE RELATIONS

REF: ADDIS ABABA 13053 (NOTAL)

1. IN COURSE NOVEMBER 7 MEETING WITH MOD AND FONMIN AT LATTER'S
REQUEST, I ASKED FONMIN WHAT HE COULD TELL ME ABOUT HIS RECENTLY
COMPLETED TRIP TO KHARTOUM. COULD HE ADD ANYTHING TO HIS PUBLIC
STATEMENT (REFTEL). US GOVERNMENT, AS ETHIOPIA'S PRINCIPAL
MILITARY SUPPLIER, HAD AN INTEREST IN EPMG'S HANDLING OF ITS
ERITREAN PROBLEM. WE HAD, ACCORDINGLY, WELCOMED HIS STATEMENT HAVING
LONG URGED, AS FONMIN AWARE, THAT EPMG PUBLICLY STATE ITS DESIRE

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SECRET

PAGE 02 ADDIS 13171 080648Z

FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF ERITREAN QUESTION AND ITS SUPPORT

FOR SUDANESE MEDIATION.

2. FONMIN RESPONDED THAT PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT TO KHARTOUM HAD BEEN TO EXPRESS BOTH EPMG'S CONTINUING CONFIDENCE IN PRESIDENT NIMERI AND INTEREST IN HIS MEDIATION EFFORTS. APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEIVING AND EPMG FULLY AWARE THAT IMPRESSION HAD GAINED CURRENCY ETHIOPIA WAS "DRAGGING ITS FEET" IN THIS CONTEXT. FACT IS, HOWEVER, THAT OTHER SIDE REMAINED DEEPLY DIVIDED AND HAD BEEN UNABLE TO INDICATE WHAT "AVENUE OF PROGRESS" IT WAS THINKING ABOUT. EPMG HAD HAD IMPRESSION THAT INSURGENTS' DIVISIONS HAD CAUSED LATTER TO ESCHEW INITIATIVES ON CONTACT WITH EPMG WHICH MIGHT REVEAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REBEL FACTIONS. IN SHORT, IT SEEMED THAT INSURGENTS FELT NEW INITIATIVE MIGHT JEOPARDIZE "TENUOUS UNITY" THEY HAD ACHIEVED. ACTIVE CONTACTS WOULD MEAN OBSERVANCE OF CERTAIN (UNSPECIFIED) GROUND RULES, FONMIN OBSERVED, POSSIBLY INCLUDING INTERRUPTION OF COMBAT OPERATIONS FOR WHICH OTHER SIDE SEEMED UNPREPARED. MOREOVER, EMPG WELL AWARE THAT PLF MILITARY COMMAND NOT REPRESENTED AT RECENT ERITREAN-KHARTOUM TALKS AND THAT TTHAT COMMAND DOES NOT FEEL BOUND BY TERMS OF "AGREEMENT" INSURGENTS HAMMERED OUT ON THAT OCCASION.

3. EPMG HAD NEVERTHELESS COME TO FEEL THAT THE POTENTIAL OF "FURTHER CONTACTS" SHOULD BE EXPLORED. HE HAD SO INFORMED GOS. QUESTION PUT TO GOS HAD BEEN HOW FURTHER "CONTACTS" MIGHT BE ORGANIZED. EMPG, FONMIN OBSERVED PARENTHETICALLY, DID NOT WISH TO CHARACTERIZE INITIAL STATE AS TALKS OR NEGOTIATIONS. EPMG NOW HOPED TO HEAR FROM GOS HOW LATTER SEES POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING CONTACTS BETWEEN EPMG AND ERITREAN INSURGENTS. EPMG HAD GIVEN ITSELF TIME TABLE OF SORTS AND HOPED TO DISCUSS MATTER FURTHER IN APPROXIMATELY SIX WEEKS.

4. FONMIN SAID HE HAD ALSO RAISED WITH PRESIDENT NIMERI FACT THAT SUPPLIES AND WEAPONS REACH ERITREAN INSURGENTS THROUGH SUDANESE TERRITORY. FONMIN NOTED THAT EPMG WELL KNOWS SUDANESE GOVT COULD NOT HALT THIS TRAFFIC COMPLETELY. EMPG NEVERTHELESS HAD MADE CLEAR THAT IT CONSIDERED SUDANESE AUTHORITIES' VIGILANCE DEFICIENT. "GOS MAY NOT RPT NOT BE FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS SITUATION," FONMIN OBSERVED TO ME. FONMIN SAID THAT NIMERI HAD ASSURED HIM THAT GOS WOULD IMPROVE ITS CONTROL MEASURES. FONMIN ADDED

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 ADDIS 13171 080648Z

THAT HE HAD CONVEYED TO NIMERI EPMG BELIEF THAT SYRIANS AND IRAQIS ARE GIVING SERIOUS THOUGHT TO PROVIDING REBELS "WITH WEAPONS WHICH COULD CHANGE THE COMPLEXION OF THE CONFLICT IN ERITREA," E.G., LONG RANGE ARTILLERY, SAM 7'S AND TANKS.

5. FONMIN SAID HE HAD TOLD NIMERI THAT IF THESE WEAPONS DID REACH ERITREAN INSURGENTS, EPMG CONSIDERED THEY COULD ONLY DO SO THROUGH SUDANESE TERRITORY. CLEARLY, SYRIA AND IRAQ WISHED TO ESCALATE

THE CONFLICT IN ERITREA. IF SO, SUAN WOULD BECOME INVOLVED THEREIN.

6. FONMIN SAID THAT PRESIDEN NIMERI HAD ASSURED HIM GOS WOULD OPPOSE TRANSIT OF HEAVY WEAPONS. NIMERI DOUBTED THAT SYRIA AND IRAQ WOULD ATTEMPT TO INTRODUCE SUCH WEAPONS INTO ERITREA AND NIMERI HAD TOLD FONMIN HE (NIMERI) HAD ASSURANCES FROM SYRIA AND IRAQ THAT SUCH WEAPONS WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE SUPPLIED. NIMERI ALSO OBSERVED THAT SOVIET UNION NORMALLY PLACES RESTRICTIONS ON THIRD PARTY TRANSFERS OF SUCH WEAPONS. HENCE, EVEN IF SYRIA AND IRAQ WISHED, SOVIETS MIGHT NOT PERMIT BAGHDAD AND DAMASCUS TO TRANSFER SUCH WEAPONS TO ERITREA.

7. I ASKED FONMIN TO CLARIFY WHAT HE SAID EARLIER: HAD EPMG GIVEN ITSELF SIX WEEKS IN WHICH TO CONSIDER FURTHER QUESTION OF CONTACTS WITH ERITREAN INSURGENTS? FORNMIN RESPONDED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE, AND REITERATED THAT HE HAD ASKED GOS TO TELL EPMG HOW TO "ORGANIZE CONTACTS IF ERITREAN INSURGENTS WISHED TO MEET." FONMIN ADDED THAT INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES, HOWEVER, SUGGEST TO EPMG THAT ERITREANS STILL UNPREPARED FOR SUCH SESSIONS. INDEED, IT SEEMS THEY ARE PREPARING FOR A NEW OFFENSIVE, FONMIN SAID. EPMG HAD IMPRESSION, HE ADDED, THAT ERITREAN INSURGENTS WERE FEELING INCREASINGLY ISOLATED: THAT THEIR SUPPORT IN ARAB WORLD WAS ERODING; AND THAT THEY HAVE FEELING THEY CANNOT EXPECT TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE WHICH HAD REACHED THEM "DURING LAST FEW YEARS."

8. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION ON NOV 6, FONMIN TOLD ARMA IN RESPONSE TO LATTER'S QUESTION THAT HE HAD GONE TO KHARTOUM "POLITICALLY, FROM POSITION OF STRENGTH." "MILITARILY," HE ADDED, "WE DO NOT SEE A VICTORY ON EITHER SIDE".
HUMMEL

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED BAGHDAD. SECRET
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PAGE 04 ADDIS 13171 080648Z

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